



ARCHITECTURAL DRAFTING & DESIGN

March 4, 2010

Housing Committee of the CT General Assembly
Room 1A Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06105

RE: Public Hearing on Visitability Legislation: Bill HB 5372 submitted by Representative Green

To whom it may concern,

Sorry I cannot attend the hearing today due to commitments with my business but I would like to submit or have this letter read into record on my behalf.

I am Manuel Silva a residential designer who specializes in accessible and universal design. I started MSDesigns LLC after becoming disabled in 1993 in a car accident on my way to work that left me a quadriplegic. Since 1996 I have worked on various different projects from a simple ramp to gain access to an existing home to 6500 sq/ft. new homes.

I support this bill due to the fact that it does not push accessibility but visitability and sustainability. I have always incorporated universal design into all my projects from additions to new construction, from using 32" min. doors for the entire home to access bedrooms, bathrooms, walk-in (roll-in) closets, etc. and 42" to 36" min. hallways with a 5' turnaround if possible and 42" min. staircases (for future chair & wheelchair lifts). Another universal design element I incorporate when possible is that all bathrooms are laid out to provide 5' turning radius or what I like to call since I'm a wheelchair user is a three point turn if sq/ft. is at a premium. Other simple design element is providing 12" to 18" from the pull side of a door which makes opening a door easier from a wheelchair along with lever handle door hardware for individuals with minimum hand dexterity & strength. I have also when possible made access into the homes by 1 step to none by using a sloped sidewalk to the main entrance and grading the land to be level the sloped sidewalk eliminating the need for hand & guard rails. All these universal design elements can be applied to new construction with a minimum additional cost of \$1 to \$2 a square foot.

Over the years I have always incorporated a 1/2 bath into a first floor plan of a two story home and to make it large enough to provide room for a wheelchair and access to a sink and toilet can done very easily. I would like to see this 1st floor bathroom if not all bathrooms be designed in a way to make them easily converted or modified to a fully accessible bathroom if needed. Like blocking installed in walls around toilets and showers/tubs so if grab bars need to be installed for residents in the future they can be added without major remodeling cost or showers be installed with low to no thresholds, etc.

These simple additions to new construction being suggested in the bill HB 5372 will not only provide and facilitate visitability in a neighborhood setting by allowing individuals with mobility disabilities to visit the homes of family or friends, decreasing social isolation, but will also allow the sustainability of the aging to remain in their homes and not be forced out due to a decline in health or a change in life style because of a disability.

So when making your decision to adopt this bill please consider what I have stated above.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Manuel Silva'.

Manuel Silva